



Monday, April 15, 2024

A Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission was held in the Council Chambers, 6615 Passons Boulevard, Pico Rivera, California.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Martinez called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Celiz, Elisaldez, Rocha, R. Martinez, A. Martinez

ABSENT : None

STAFF PRESENT: Alvaro Betancourt, Director of Community & Economic Development
Julia Gonzalez, Deputy Director of Community & Economic Development
Estefany Franco, Planner
Aneli Gonzalez, Assistant Planner

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The pledge of allegiance was led by Vice Chairperson Martinez.

PUBLIC HEARING(S):

1. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 758 AND VTTM NO. 84271 – A REQUEST TO DEVELOP A 95-TOWNHOME DEVELOPMENT AND FIND THE PROJECT CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT PER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) CLASS 32, IN-FILL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 15332

Assistant Planner Gonzalez provided the staff report presentation. The applicant representatives for Brandywine are requesting approval to construct a 95-unit townhome development at 6540 Rosemead Boulevard. The subject property is in the General Commercial Zone and is designated as Mixed Use under the Land Use Element of the General Plan. Surrounding land uses include commercial and residential properties. The parcel measures approximately 4.04 acres and has been the site of the Knights Inn Hotel since 1962, according to city records.

Assistant Planner Gonzalez concluded the report, noting that the project applicant Chris Courtney, CEQA consultant Mark Blodgett, a traffic consultant from LSA, and the City's traffic engineer were present to answer questions.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Erika Alatraste, Joe Carbajal and Antonio and Grecia Carbajal submitted written comments in favor of the project.

The following speakers addressed the Planning Commission regarding the project:

Fred Conde:

- He addressed the Planning Commission to express concerns about the streetlight calibration, the narrowness of the streets, the high number of units proposed for the lot size, and the location of the driveway on Rosemead Boulevard. He also raised issues regarding dust, dirt, debris, and potential rodent infestations. Additionally, he inquired about the possibility of hiring residents from Pico Rivera and asked whether any incentives would be available for Pico Rivera residents to purchase the new townhomes.

John Lozano:

- He addressed the Planning Commission to express concerns about homelessness, drug activity, and traffic signals that fail to turn green. He also stated that the area is overly congested and crowded.

Bobby Romo:

- He addressed the Planning Commission, stating that the project is a beautiful addition to the community and will help address issues of criminal activity in the area. However, he expressed concerns about gridlock and the traffic signal at the intersection of Coffman Pico and Rosemead Boulevard.

Antonio Carbal:

- He addressed the Planning Commission, stating that the project is a great addition to Rosemead Boulevard. However, he also expressed concerns about traffic and density in the area.

Miguel Vasquez:

- He addressed the Planning Commission, expressing concern that Pico Rivera lacks the necessary infrastructure to support the project. He stated that he does not believe it is a good idea for the project to proceed.

Chris (last name not decipherable):

- He addressed the Planning Commission, expressing concerns about waste, sludge, and odors emanating from the drains. He inquired whether the project will include a separate drainage system.

Name - Not Given:

- He addressed the Planning Commission, expressing his admiration for the City's residents and their thoughtful comments.

Chairperson Martinez closed the Public Hearing as there were no additional public comments.

Chris Courtney, Project Manager for Brandywine Homes, addressed the Planning Commission and introduced Alex Hernandez, Division President and Steven Edwards, Director of Land Acquisition. He also introduced representatives including Civil Engineer Dane McDougall from C&V and Ambarish Mukherjee from LSA, who participated virtually.

Mr. Courtney accepted the conditions outlined in the resolutions presented to the Planning Commission. He noted for the record that Brandywine would only be able to underground three of the four electric poles, with City staff agreeing to allow one pole to remain above ground.

Mr. Courtney stated that the site would include a self-contained drainage system to reduce runoff from the property.

Vice Chairperson Martinez introduced Councilmember Eric Lutz and Pico Water District Board Member David Angelo. He noted discrepancies in the Department of Public Works conditions of approval, including:

1. A reference incorrectly identifying the water purveyor as the Pico Rivera Water Authority instead of the Pico Water District.
2. Whether the applicant had considered an entrance through the frontage road or relocating the entrance to the side.

Deputy Director Gonzalez clarified that the reference to City Water had been addressed in the presentation.

Mr. Courtney explained that a traffic study was conducted for the project, evaluating the frontage road and the intersection at Carron and Coffman Pico Road. The study assessed road, intersection, and traffic signal conditions.

Commissioner Elisaldez inquired about the cost of the townhomes and whether any units would be affordable housing.

Mr. Courtney responded that sales prices were estimated between \$500,000 and \$600,000, with sales anticipated approximately 1 to 1.5 years after project completion.

Commissioner Elisaldez expressed concerns about the project's density and referenced the Trip Generation Manual, 11th Edition, used in the traffic study. He asked when it was last updated.

Farhad Iranitalab, the City's traffic engineer, confirmed that the 11th Edition was the most recent version. Ambarish Mukherjee, the traffic engineer for Brandywine, added that it was released the previous year.

Commissioner Elisaldez noted that traffic counts from the site dated back to August 1993 when it operated as a hotel, which generated less traffic compared to the proposed townhomes. He questioned the study's conclusion of a net increase of only 179 vehicle trips, citing concerns about traffic and the high density of the development.

Commissioner Rocha asked whether any incentives were available for residents and which contractors would be hired for construction.

Mr. Courtney stated there were no incentive programs in place. He explained that labor contracts are bid out to various trades, selecting the best combination of location, schedule, and cost.

Mr. Courtney also noted that the site is part of the R-40 Zoning Overlay, which allows up to 40 units per acre, while the Brandywine project proposes only 23 units per acre.

Vice Chairperson Martinez inquired whether Condition of Approval No. 20 had been eliminated.

Mr. Courtney confirmed that it was removed because an existing traffic signal did not require modification, improvement, or upgrades per the traffic study.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked if the site had adequate infrastructure for storm drains, sewers, and debris capture mechanisms.

Mr. Courtney responded that the site has the necessary infrastructure and will-serve letters from the Pico Water District and L.A. County Sanitation District. The storm drain system was designed to reduce outflows, improving storm drain conditions.

Commissioner Rocha reiterated residents' concerns about the traffic light at the intersection and asked whether this could be further investigated. She also inquired if the Planning Commission could require affordable housing units.

Deputy Director Gonzalez stated that staff had investigated the traffic signalization. She noted that the project does not include affordable housing but advised that the Commission could require it, though it might increase costs for the developers.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked whether developers are obligated to improve roads, sidewalks, medians, curbs, and gutters.

Mr. Courtney explained that their improvements are limited to the service road in the immediate vicinity and do not include medians.

Vice Chairperson Martinez also asked whether the Public Works Department had investigated the traffic signal to determine if upgrades were necessary or if mitigation measures for noise and sediment were included.

Mr. Courtney confirmed that the resolution included conditions to address noise and dust. He concluded by stating that demolition is anticipated to begin in January or February 2025. The staging area will be on-site, with security provided through cameras or personnel, and the site will be enclosed with perimeter fencing.

Motion by Chairperson Martinez, seconded by Vice Chairperson Martinez. Motion passes by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Celiz, Elisaldez, Rocha, R. Martinez, A. Martinez
NOES: None
ABSENT: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. **Comprehensive Zoning Code Update Study Session 4 of 4**

Dudek Consultant Janet Rodriguez introduced herself as an urban planner and project manager working with the city and introduced Catherine Tang Saez, urban designer with Dudek. Ms. Rodriguez advised that the presentation is the last of the four rounds of study sessions and proceeded to provide an overview of the progress the team has made on the work for the comprehensive zoning code update and objective design standards.

Commissioner Rocha commented that the city allows holiday sales but does not want to allow street vending on sidewalks.

Planner Franco responded that there are separate regulations for holiday sales and street vending based on state regulations.

Commissioner Celiz stated that the city agreed to allow street vendors on certain streets.

Planner Franco responded that she was referring to holiday and special event sales on private property. Street vending is separate, and there are specific state regulations that need to be followed.

Commissioner Celiz asked if the city would allow street vendors on Parsons and Washington Boulevard, noting this was not previously approved.

Planner Franco responded that street vending requires a different application process that follows state law and must get approval by different departments. Planner Franco stated that staff receives applications to sell flowers during Valentine's Day or Mother's Day on private commercial property, not the public sidewalk. The question posed to the Commission was whether they would like to continue allowing special event sales on private property through the Temporary Use Permit application process.

Commissioner Rocha stated her concern was regarding street vending.

Planner Franco responded that currently, the city does not have any approved street vendors. Code Enforcement addresses street vending during holiday events.

Director Betancourt stated that the Department has an active Code Enforcement Division with weekend and evening coverage.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked Planner Franco how many feet away from a school is the limit for street vendors.

Planner Franco responded that the distance requirement for street vending is 500 feet away from a school.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked if the city is making any efforts to collaborate with the school district to enforce street vending.

Director Betancourt responded that the Department has four full-time Code Enforcement Officers with shifts that run seven days a week, including evening hours.

Commissioner Rocha stated that she was in favor of yard sales but not street vending.

Commissioner Elisaldez asked for clarification regarding the commercial 10' setback, relocating parking, and requiring open space for commercial developments over 75,000 square feet equal to 5%. He also asked if outdoor dining would impact parking.

Catherine Tang Saez responded that staff is proposing to change the regulations for parking. The parking minimums currently in the code are being updated to match best practices and the recommendations from a parking study commissioned by the city.

Planner Franco stated that the city had a parking study completed by Walker Consultants a few years ago, and staff is adopting the recommendations as part of the code update. Staff is also asking Dudek to conduct further research to see what neighboring cities' best practices are regarding certain uses.

Commissioner Elisaldez asked if the citywide parking requirements will be reduced, mentioning that the Whittier Specific Plan includes parking reductions.

Director Betancourt responded that parking is a priority for that area, and there is no effort to minimize standards, but there is an effort to modernize them.

Commissioner Elisaldez stated that high-density housing was proposed in the Whittier Boulevard corridor. He noted concerns about parking for each unit averaging “one point something,” which indicates a reduction. He acknowledged the idea of being more efficient in shopping centers but mentioned discussions about eliminating street parking under the Whittier Boulevard Project.

Director Betancourt responded that he could not speak directly to the Whittier Boulevard Specific Plan but clarified that it is not the case for Zoning Code update.

Commissioner Elisaldez stated there is a push toward eliminating parking and referenced high-density projects. He asked if the issue of large vehicles on private property in residential areas, including temporary storage pods in driveways and streets, was being addressed.

Catherine Tang Saez responded that in the parking and loading chapter, there is language about prohibiting certain commercial-type vehicles on private residential properties, whether in the driveway itself or on the street.

Commissioner Elisaldez asked if temporary storage pods are included and noted that pods are now on the street.

Catherine Tang Saez responded that she did not know if the language specifically addressed pods or storage containers but would investigate it.

Director Betancourt stated that currently, the code allows for an RV to be parked in the front yard setback. However, the same code does not allow a detached camper to be parked in the front yard setback. He invited the Commission to provide feedback on these issues to ensure they are addressed in the final recommendations.

Vice Chairperson Martinez asked if a developer would have to adhere to the new regulations or if they are working under a different set of rules. He inquired whether architectural plans or renderings submitted now would need to comply with these updates.

Planner Franco responded that the updates have not yet been adopted. The process will proceed as follows:

- A City Council study session in June
- Release of an administrative draft to the public in August
- Public comments collected before a Planning Commission hearing for recommendation to the City Council.

She clarified that projects submitted currently would adhere to the existing codes as adopted.

Chairperson Martinez concluded by stating he had no further questions. He praised the new standards discussed, particularly those regarding public open space in large

commercial developments. He expressed enthusiasm for seeing the final draft, noting that the standards will improve both aesthetics and functionality within the city.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORTS:

Director Betancourt reported there was nothing at the last City Council meeting that affected the Department.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

OLD BUSINESS:

Director Betancourt reported on the signage for horse trails along the bridge on Whittier Boulevard. He stated that he spoke with Noe Negrete, the Director of Public Works, who confirmed that the horse trails will be included in the city's wayfinding study. Once completed, appropriate signage will be deployed, and the study's advisory body will provide recommendations on where the signage should be placed to be most helpful. This item was added to the list at the request of Vice Chairperson Martinez.

Director Betancourt also reported on the Burke project, which is an 18-unit single-family residential development that has already been entitled. The project has encountered challenges with the Water District.

Assistant Planner Gonzalez stated that the Burke project developers have experienced challenges with submitting their plans for review and require clearance from the State Board. They have not resubmitted their plans, and the project is not currently in process. Staff is drafting a letter to inform the developers of the missing items and inquire whether they can move forward.

Director Betancourt provided an update on the KB Homes project, a 45-unit townhome development currently under plan check. Once the plan check process is completed, the developers can proceed with demolition and construction.

Deputy Director Gonzalez stated that the developers plan to begin grading in early May 2024. The construction timeline is estimated to be about two years from that point.

Director Betancourt reported on the Mercury Project, noting that the developer has an entitlement but has chosen not to act on it at this time. The primary reason is financial, as they have not been able to secure financial partners.

Director Betancourt stated there are no new developments currently in the pipeline.

Commissioner Celiz asked how long the Burke project has been active, whether the developer owns the property, and who is responsible for maintenance.

Deputy Director Gonzalez responded that the developer has owned the property for about six years and that staff will follow up to ensure the site is maintained.

Commissioner Celiz stated that the Mercury Project site also needs to be kept clean and maintained. She recalled an ordinance requiring owners of unused land to keep it clean and presentable for the community.

Deputy Director Gonzalez confirmed that this is correct and stated that staff will follow up accordingly.

Commissioner Celiz mentioned reading on social media that Sky Zone might be locating to Pico Rivera. She asked if the Commission would be informed when new developments like that are planned.

Director Betancourt responded that the Commission would be informed if he had definitive information. A franchisee expressed strong interest and has approached the city to have preliminary discussions about opening a Sky Zone in Pico Rivera.

Vice Chairperson Martinez stated that he attended the last City Council meeting and had nothing new to report. He also mentioned that in March, he and some colleagues attended the Planning Commission Academy, which was very informative. He recommended others consider attending in the future.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, Chairperson Aric Martinez adjourned the Planning Commission meeting at 8:00 p.m. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

Yarisma Rocha, Chairperson

ATTEST:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct report of the proceedings of the Planning Commission Regular Meeting on April 15, 2024, and approved by the Planning Commission on February 24, 2025.

Alvaro Betancourt, Director
Community & Economic Development Department